UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE - EXPLORING THE DIGITAL CITY
FRIDAY 24 FEBRUARY 06 SESSION ONE - TAPE 1

LORENS HOLM: Shall we begin. I think that there are a couple of people who aren't here yet but rather than wait longer they'll find themselves when they get here. I'd like to introduce briefly what this is about. First of all my name is Lorens Holm and sitting next to me is Nicholas Fyfe and between us we've organised this workshop called Exploring the digital city: space, culture and politics. Now just in a nutshell, it's been organised into four seminars, each with a different theme. I think you all have this info pack on the second page, if you don't kind of pick up, we kind of have the scheme of the thing here with the four separate sections, for separate themes. I will say more about that shortly but just to say that the first one which is today is called New media + new space. This seminar will be focused around an installation down in Centre space which is for those, probably most of you do know what it is, it's a visual research lab in this building that's run by the university. That installation is a collaboration between myself and Paul Guzzardo who is sitting here to my right, and two other chaps, Adam Covell and Jonathan Bell who unfortunately are not able to be here today to present the work and discuss it, they're from London and they were commuting up here and there were some complexities to their lives and they just aren't able to be here. We will at some point probably shortly before lunch go down to look at the thing and then come back up here, there will be a number of presentations and discuss of it and at some point I hope you'll maybe break into small groups to discuss specific issues raised by it. That aspect of today's seminar will be more or less organised by Catriona Macaulay and Shaleph O'Neill, both who are on my right here. I've asked them to be chairs to this thing. I should just say that the, well actually what I'd really like to do now, I'll just say briefly the intention with this is really to create a rather small group of people, I mean, you call it workshop, it's not a conference, that can debate and address a number of issues relating to urban space and the design of cities, you can see I think from the seminar list, which I'll go through soon, that it's intended to be interdisciplinary. I have this fantasy that if we get interesting people from different disciplines to talk to each other that we might learn more about the city. And I think before I go further, should we ask people to just say who they are, just go around the room. I was thinking we all have our names badges but I just thought that as a way to begin perhaps we could say two words about what discipline we're in and maybe what some of you interests are. Peter, shall we start?

PETER: I'm Peter Richardson, I'm a lecturer and researcher in the School of Television Imaging, I've spent the last ten years working the film industry and am now working in the education industry, research industry, and my research, embryonic as it is at the moment, is looking at the methods of delivering artist's work via HD and via servers into cinemas, that's the main thrust of what I'm doing.

Steve: My name is Steve Flack, I'm the head of the School of Television and Imaging, I've only been in academia for ten years officially, the rest of the time

I was either a visiting lecturer and more involved in running my own business and as a freelance TV director and designer. My research is manifested into a few different areas but in particular at the moment it's much more focused on 3D visualisation, in particular I'm trying to aurora borealis through using data that hopefully will be collected via satellite but that's another question that's becoming an issue for me at the moment, but I'm very much involved with the other areas of the schools, interest in 3D visualisation with medical visualisation and forensic art and a number of other areas that are really growing of interest. I suppose out of animation background but certainly do with the way that new technologies are growing and the communication to areas in terms of medicine and as I say forensic art and other areas where normally perhaps they wouldn't have been able to access the schools that we've got as artists, so that's really interesting.

GRAHAM: My name is Graham Hutton, I'm an architect, I'm head of the School of Architecture but also a practising architect, and my research is practice-based and I'm developing a vocabulary of architecture that's got a very distinct interest in the notion of place and identity.

PAUL: Paul Guzzardo, I'm one of the collaborators on Laser/net, which we'll be looking at later this afternoon. I'm a lawyer and a bit of a media activist and designer, doing projects in St Louis, Missouri, and I'll be discussing those projects in a paper I'm presenting later this afternoon.

SIMON: I'm Simon Unwin from the School of Architecture, and I suppose I'm interested in anything and everything. It's a bit difficult to be precise so I'll leave it at that.

KATRINA: I'm Katrina Macaulay, I'm a lecturer in Interactive Media Design and by training and trade I suppose I'm an ethnographer of informative behaviours and that has led me to be interested in the concept of information space, and I guess that's why I'm here today.

SHELAPH: Shaleph O'Neill, I'm also a lecturer in Interactive Media Design. I suppose my research interests covers two main things, one is the semiotics of new media and exploring how semiotic theory can be used to explain interactions with new media, and also I'm interested in issues of place and place, and the recreation of real spaces in digital technology and how that's possible.

HAMED: My name is Hamed Vancoaten [?] and I'm responsible for the historical and theoretical studies, architectural bits for the design school here and I'm also involved with the School of Television and Imaging. I used to run a design consultancy but I've now been in full time education for the last three or four years, and I write on popular culture and critical theory.

LORENS: My name is Lorens Holm, I'm an architect and teacher of architecture. I run the history and theory programme in the School of Architecture at the University of Dundee. My research interests at the moment are focused around psychoanudic [?] theory and in particular the

work of the analyst Jacque Lacan. I'm interested in areas of crossover between the space implied by, attributed to the mind, the psyche, by psychoanalytic theory and the space that we attribute to architecture.

NICK: I'm Nick Fife, I'm in the Geography department at the university here. Some of my interests focus around issues to do with urban public space, particularly the policing of public space and the regulation of behaviour, and one of the areas that I've looked at in the past is the role of things like close circuit television in the role of regulating behaviour, controlling behaviour in public spaces.

JOANNE: I'm Joanne Madden, I'm from the Geography department. I've got an interest in how migration as one type of mobility has been made legible in different times and concepts and places, and that's led me recently to an interest in biometric technologies, and so that's what I'm interested in in relation to this today.

PAUL: I'm Paul Brobin [?], I'm a first year architecture student. I'm interested in architecture and art and everything that surrounds it.

CATHERINE: My name is Catherine Finlay, I'm currently senior lecturer in the Architecture school. I have been in practice for many years, recently started in the academic world the last year and a half. I've set up a practice-led research unit in the Architecture school called Field that's connected to an implement unit which is called Fieldwork – spot the obvious rationale for the naming. I've got various interests but in this case the relevant interest is the idea of landscape and how information is embedded in it, and I'm currently working on projects in Yorkshire and possibly Fife to do with how landscapes have different readings to different people, how information, invisible information, could possibly become more visible and more legible by different means, and currently exploring how the digital media can assist that and that's quite a challenge for me because I've always been a very physical, very tactile kind of architect and I'm really interested in being in this seminar and I'm very intrigued by all the people that are assembled here and I have to congratulate Lorens for fantastic imagination to pull this all together, and I'm looking forward to it - new ideas and new intellectual landscapes that I can acquire today.

NIGEL: My name is Nigel Johnson, I'm a research studies coordinator for the faculty at Duncan Johnson [?] so I look after as far as possible the PhDs across the faculty, but I'm also an artist, an educator and a researcher, and my research interests are in interactive media and particularly large scale interactive installations, artificial intelligence and how that is related to digital artefacts. I'm interested in quantum mechanics, working with scientists, I'm working on gesture-based recognition systems with colleagues in applied computing, so I have a very vast sort of range of areas of interest in terms of research, but as applied to my practice as an artist. That's about it for me, I think.

BETH: I'm Beth Lord, I'm in the Philosophy department here at the University of Dundee. One of my research interests is in philosophy and museums, and philosophies of space, time, representation, identity, these kinds of issues and how they relate to museums, space and the planning and display that goes on in museums. I have a bit of a background in museum planning and museum consulting as well as in academia, and more broadly I'm interested in post-structuralist philosophy and its relation to enlightenment thinking and philosophy of art more broadly.

RANNA: I'm Ranna [?] Paterson from the University of Glasgow, a geographer whose interests over the years have been in political and urban geography. More recently what I'm looking at and interested in is a question of politics of urban regeneration but at different scales, so more locally as well as at the level of the region vis a vis the city, and in particular the question of how community participation is brought into this process of urban change.

VEE: Vee Pollack, I'm an art historian but currently masquerading as geographer working as a research fellow in the department of Geography at Glasgow University. My research interests look at the relationship between art and the city, so I look at visual representation of city, photographic surveys and their social and physical geography, and at the moment the main that my research looks at the role of public art in urban regeneration, currently doing some work in the Gorbals in Glasgow and looking at new media, how artists are using new media in public space.

LORENS: Thank you. I'd like to just say a couple more introductory comments. The first is that – and I probably should have said this before I drop the ball onto Peter – our intention with this was really to bring together the social science and the art disciplines; I know of include architecture in the art disciplines, and partly the way people were selected to be here, invited to be here I should say, has to do with that, to try and get that kind of representation. I'd also like to say this workshop is the inaugural event of a reformed research institution called the Geddes Institute for Urban Research, and I'm pleased that an umber of other people who represent either research institutes or research groups are here because we would very much like to begin to establish different kinds of interdisciplinary research links, in particular I'm referring, Catherine, to your work, to Field and Simon, to the Cara group, and there are probably others here that I'm not familiar with, at least not off the top of my head, and just to say that this kind of engagement across these groups and institutes is something that we would look forward to. Nick will say in a few minutes a little bit more about the Geddes and where it's come from and where it's going. I should just also say that this all began in late November, early December when we received an AHRC research grant to fund this and we've been working extremely fast and furious really since right after Christmas to get this together, and I was complaining about this recently to one of my colleagues about, oh my god, how can we do this in such a short amount of time, this is Michael Spend for those you who know him. He was saying, I think this is fantastic, you get your money and two month's later you've got a workshop going, and so we hope that there is a kind of rapidity and spontaneity to this thing which will carry it through. I

guess just before I give it over to Nick I really should say a few thank yous as well because there have been a lot of people involved in this in addition to the AHRC. The School of Architecture and the Department of Geography have supported this with an enormous amount of time and effort, and in particular Lynne Alexander in the School of Architecture has been tirelessly mailing things out to people and we've also had some of the computer support people from the School of Architecture, Richard White and Pete Campbell really have been very, very helpful for us. And in a way I think the interactive media lab is becoming one of those supporters as well, Catriona is here, as I said, chairing it but actually I think your another research institute that is beginning to join us and support this. Also you'll be seeing the Laser/net installation downstairs soon and that wouldn't really have happened without Centrespace, without the support of the visual research centre and people like Malcolm Robertson and Jane Cumberledge and Mickey Hale down there. Anyway, perhaps Nick you'll say a few words about where the Geddes is.

NICK: Just very briefly, as Lorens has mentioned, the university is in the process of establishing what will be called the Geddes Institute for Urban Research, which really is an attempt to bring together urbanists who are currently scattered across different departments, schools and faculties within the university. Like most institutions, people with interest in the city tend to be based in architecture and geography and planning and community, psychology philosophy, English and so on, and so we thought there was a real opportunity to try and pull those people together in some kind of closer dialogue. I should say in a way, the idea of this Geddes Institute builds on what the Department of Planning has established for several years, which is called the Geddes Institute but what we're trying to do in a sense is develop that so it becomes much more interdisciplinary, so it isn't just focused around planning issues but draws in people from architecture, geography and a range of humanities and social sciences. I'm aware that there will be people here that aren't necessarily very familiar with Dundee and the university and I should point that the reason why Geddes' name is attached to this institute is that for 30 years he was Professor of Botany at the University of Dundee, he was appointed in 1888. Unfortunately the building that Geddes worked in has since been demolished to make way for the university tower along the Perth Road, and it's clear from the correspondence that survives that Geddes' relationship with the university was a slightly unhappy one. He spent most of his time moaning to the Principal about lack of funding and money, and apparently at one point he required £100 for books and equipment for his botany lab, and the Principal only gave him £50, so Geddes went ahead and spent £100 and got a very furious letter from the Principal saying that he was going to suspend all his funding for Geddes' activities, and in fact reduced Geddes' budget for his department from £50 to £35 a year. So in some ways it's nice to know that those kinds of debates have been going on for a very long time, under-funding of research and so on. But given Geddes wide-ranging research interests, it seemed to us highly appropriate that an institute which is about promoting interdisciplinary research around the city should bear his name. As Lorens mentioned, this reformulated Geddes institute is at a very early stage and its development. We've got plans obviously to set up a website, to create some kind of management committee, but also more

general create some sort of advisory board that draws in people from other institutions in Scotland, the UK and internationally. And really I suppose this AHRC funded event is the first substantive demonstration of the presence of the Geddes Institute and of its aspirations to bring together people from different disciplinary backgrounds, to try and promote dialogue and new research collaboratives between different disciplines. So in a sense this is the starting point of a journey that we hope will see the flourishing of a new interdisciplinary urban institute.

LORENS: Thank you. I'd like to say a few words about the workshop programme and give you some sense of where it's going and how we see it being organised. I said just referring to this sheet which has this programme on it, I think I've already said that there are four themed sessions, and essentially the way we see it being organised is that there will be two speaker presentations in the morning, followed then by lunch and then discussion afterwards, probably breaking into discussion groups which will pick up specific issues raised by the speaker presentations. There may be opportunities for other kinds of workshop activities to go on as well but primarily we see this at the moment at least as a kind of discussion group. I'd like to just say a little bit about the four themes. The first one which is today is called New Media and New Space and it's actually probably the only one that doesn't fit into the pattern that I've just outlined. Instead of having two or three invited speakers we'll be touring the installation that's down in the Centrespace gallery today, the installation called laser/net. That is a collaboration between myself and Paul Guzzardo and two other chaps from London, and its intention broadly was to raise questions about how new media has begun to define and rethink how we use and inhabit space. Now, with respect to that, after the gallery tour and the opportunity for us to explain what we've done and you to have potshots at us, we'll return here and have a slightly more formal discussion. I know that Paul Guzzardo will be presenting a paper on some of his work and I have some comments as well on what we've done. The second session is called Media ecology and freedom of speech, and the speakers for that are the president of the Media Ecology Association, a chap named Lance Strate, who has written, he's published one book on Marshall McCluen [?] and I know there is another one coming out, it may actually already be out, I'm not sure. He's been interested in media as an environment, sort of following on to the heritage as it were of Marshall McCluen. The second speaker, the person who in effect he'll be talking to, is a chap named Andres Guadamuz who is a lawyer and lecturer at Edinburgh Law School, and who has had an instrumental role and involvement in creative comments in this country. I should also say that for virtually all of these sessions we have a kind of third speaker who is called the chair, in this case it's a chap named Neil Spiller who is Professor of Architecture and Digital Theory at the Bartlett, who has written and edited a number of books on space and cyberspace and cyber technology from the point of view of an architect, the point of view of someone that at least ostensibly is building space. He will chair that but I think he's probably also going to be presenting some of his own work. The third session is called Urban space and infrastructure, and our intention with that was to look at broader issues of urban space and city infrastructure than what we'll be addressing today, also

space in the title of today's session, and we've invited Saskia Sassin and Stephen Graham to be the main speakers. Saskia Sassin is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago and the Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics, and has published and edited several books, I've got two here and off the top of my head I don't remember the others. The recently edited Digital Formations, which is about information theory and how that's reorganising social space and different forms of social discourse, and then the earlier book on globalisation, Globalisation And Its Discontents which I assume is a reference to Freud's Civilisation And Discontents. Steve Graham is a geographer at the University of Durham and has recently co-authored a text called Splintering Urbanism on the effects of digital technology on urban space, the way urban space is being realigned outside of the ways it's been conventionally connected by street space. The chair for that is a Professor of Architecture from Columbia, Saskia Sassin affectionately refers to Steve Graham and David Grahame Shane as my two Grahams. He's recently, it's just been published, this book called Recommended Urbanism and has been teaching urbanism at Columbia for many years. The final session, which I might actually ask you to say a little bit more about, it's more addressing political questions and questions of policing, issues of how digital technology is actually being used to police space.

NICK: Just to say that the two main speakers for that session are first of all, David Lyon, who is based at Queens University in Ontario. He's written extensively about electronic surveillance in the city, whether that's through things like closed circuit television cameras or whether it's through the trail that one leaves by using things like mobile phones and ATMs and so on, and most recently has written about the impacts of 9/11 on processes of surveillance in urban space. The second speaker, Mike Neillis, who is from Strathclyde University, his interests are more in things like electronic tagging and the way in which electronic tagging is increasingly being used to monitor people's movements in urban areas. So they will both be exploring the ways in which surveillance is involved in regulating people's behaviours, movements and so on in urban space.

LORENS: I guess I'd like to say that both Nick and I are pleased and really excited by the calibre of people that we've got coming. These are all people who have made very important contributions to their field. I was kind of gobsmacked when Saskia Sassin said yes, this sounds great, I'll come to this. The fear when one organises something like this is picking up the phone and kind of cold calling people, or people that you really only have very distant connections with, and the pleasure is when they jump on it and say, right on, I really want to be involved in this, and I have to say that cycle of trepidation and the kind of relief and enjoyment of the ensuing conversation has happened a number of times in the organising of this thing. I think I've said that the intention with this is to foment cross-disciplinary research collaborations in the area of design and the cities, and it really is one of our intentions, we actually are hoping that perhaps out of these discussions, these four seminars, that people will discover areas of interest and might want to continue working with each other in different formats. And indeed, I think it's very important that as many people as possible come to all four sessions.

Obviously it may not be possible for everyone to make them but I would really like the new media people who are here to go the distance and wind up also participating in policing and politics at the end so one could actually have a conversation about, how does a new media artist who is using space as this media for remixing and changing or challenging the normal relationships we have to space, what would someone like that have to say whose research is primarily in say how CCTV surveying is used to police space, which is also kind of new media and not that the guy sitting in the control room of the London Underground with all his things there is going to start playing VJ DJ but that they might actually have an understanding of space that could inform the new media artist and vice versa. I have to say that there are a number of the sort of policing and politics people who have every intention of participating just weren't able to make it here for our first session. I have to say that if the fomenting of research, looking at research possibilities was the overt agenda, indeed it was the agenda that we published in our grant application, a couple of the sub-agendas are as follows: Architecture traditionally had the lead role in the design of cities and I think to some extent we've lost that. Schools of architecture rarely actually teach urban design anymore and most architects – this isn't true of all architects but most architects do not situate their work in the larger context of urbanism. I think that's not true of certain architects like Rem Coolhouse [?] but I think it's probably true of most and indeed it's true of the way architecture programmes are organised now, there are very, very few programmes which actually teach urban design. Harvard I know does but in fact we didn't really interact with them very much when I was a student there and for instance, Dundee, we don't have urban design here, not really. I think most of the interesting thinking in urbanism right now is really in geography and sociology departments, and so I kind of have this idea not that architecture needs to steal back that agenda, I don't think we want to take anything from geographers, but just that we could rejoin that thing. And I said that traditionally architects have that role, I'm really referring to a conservative agenda I guess that harks right back to the Renaissance where the line between artist, architecture and urbanist was not so clearly drawn and most cities were conceived of agglomerations of civic spaces and most of the character and formation of those spaces were worked out by artist-architects, using incidentally one and two point perspective studies which was at that time the radically new representational technology. So, in fact that isn't so, it is actually rather a conservative thing to say maybe the people who are working the latest representational technologies, new media, might actually have some voice in the designing and texturing of space. And I guess if broadly, this workshop is organised around a series of questions or around a generic question, it would really be for everybody here to think about how what they do might have some bearing on the defining and use of public space. Now obviously if you're an architect one might think that's a fairly direct and obvious link, but perhaps it's not so obvious to some of the new media artists, perhaps it's not so obvious to some of the philosophers or some of the other disciplines here. so what do you do that might have bearing on how public space is used, how it's instrumental in the definition of things like participatory democracy, the formation of identity etc. I should just say – Nick wrote me a note here which I'm finally going to get to, I think he wrote it a long

time ago – you may have noticed these two chaps here. I should have maybe begun, in fact I should have introduced you. What we want to do with these sessions, if it isn't already obvious, what these guys are doing is taping them, and there is a reason for that, there are a couple of reasons for it and they're not just taping it, they're videoing it. Partly the reason for videoing it is quite simply Catriona said how in god's name are you going to know who said what if you just tape it, if you don't actually have the video as well of who is speaking, but the reason why we're taping it is because one of our intentions is to publish the papers of the invited speakers and also to publish the edited transcripts of the discussion that ensues. I think that's very important, it's actually an extremely important part of what we want to do here, and partly it's too just quite simply document what's going on but also I think there is an idea that frequently the most deeply penetrating insights happen kind of off the cuff before they're kind of worked and reworked into a research agenda, and we actually hope that by publishing these kind of transcripts which are beginning to pick apart the papers that are presented and to sort of focus on different, isolated issues in them, that actually we'll produce a rather robust research document, I think it's called RAE research output for most of us here. And indeed that was also in our AHRC application. I should also just say that I think lurking behind it is that fantasy that I think most of us have, you're walking down a street, you've probably stepped in a puddle and soaked one foot and thinking about something and you think, god, if only I had captured that brilliant insight on the way to work, if only I'd had a tape recorder on me and now I suddenly find myself in my office and I'm trying to recover it on paper and somehow it doesn't have the sort of spark and insight that it had in the flash and insight moment when I was stepping in my puddle. So for all of you who have wished that you have the tape recorder with you when you were thinking, now you have that thing. I think I'd like also by way of introductory comments to try and make a little bit clearer the link between public space and a number of the themes that are emerging, or I hope, I assume will be emerging from the different seminars indeed, themes that we hope by picking the people we've picked that will be emerging from it, because I have this idea that there is a kind of link between freedom of speech and public space, that there is a link between robust enforcement of intellectual property rights that's sort of recently been going through the courts and the sort of robust policing of space that's happening through digital infrastructures like the CCTV camera. I actually think that there are strong links and they're are perhaps rather difficult to articulate although I think undeniable underlying most of what we talk about, they're certainly difficult to articulate or perhaps they're not but it's only that it would require like a PhD thesis to do it. But I'd like to make a few introductory comments about that before we go down and look at laser/net, and they sort of fall into two categories. The first I'd like to begin with a kind of what I call an intellectual lineage, the second is I'd like to talk a littlie bit about identity and space, how you need to disappear from public scrutiny in order to articulate your identity. The first is the lineage and it sort of relates back to why all this is in the Geddes Institute, not why it's in an institute of urbanism but why Geddes is important and it sort of follows on from a number of the things that Nicholas said. It goes something like this: Geddes was a student of Thomas Henry Huxley's, Huxley was the grandfather of Aldous Huxley and the physiologist

Sir Andrew Huxley, and he was known in his day as Darwin's bulldog. We was one of the main puntlyrisers [?] and promoting of Darwin's Origin Of The Species, both in academe and in the popular press, he gave numerous lectures to working men's groups and things like that in this incredibly angry debate that developed after the publication of Origin Of The Species, people in the church on one side claiming a kind of primary position for man and Darwin trying to situate man in the field of species, as it were. So it goes, Darwin, Huxley, Geddes, then it goes Lewis Mumford and Marshall McCluen, and Lewis Mumford, the urbanist, was a student and very close friend of Geddes'. Mumford was then very, very influential on McCluen; McCluen was the grandfather as it were of the emerging discipline of media ecology and a central figure in theorising information technology. And I'd like to add a final one, Robert Vanturi [?], the architect, who has written a number of books, I think the most important was Learning From Las Vegas. Let me now just elaborate a little bit more about why these people are connected. In effect, Darwin's theory of evolution was to say that man has evolved in response to his environment, in effect the only driver as it were for the development of species is the environment, adaptation to the environment. That then goes through Huxley to this chap Geddes who it's not just that he's a generalist and an interdisciplinary person with one foot in botany and another in the design of cities, but actually for him it was fundamental that design of cities, or design of urban space, can only be understood in the broader context of this larger environment and that larger environment for him was not just the sort of ecological environment and he has a kind of what he calls a valley section which situates each city within a sequence of echo systems, not just a kind of natural or ecological environment, but an environment that takes on board sociology in effect, how people work, how people live etc. So this kind of environmental thinking that begins with the origin of the species that insists that environment is the driver of the form and texture of a person, comes right through Huxley to Geddes. And when Lewis Mumford gets a hold of it, he's best known really for his work on technology, and what he's interested in or what his innovation is, he's interested in technology obviously, technology and understanding the history of human civilisation through the history of technology, but what he's interested in is how technology can be understood as an environment. He's not interested in this machine or that machine, but he's interested in how technology understood as an ambient environment then shapes us. And the difference is that technology as a machine understood as an object is quite simply something you have object relations with, you can love it, you can hate it, you can throw it away, but an environment is something you have to adapt to, that's I think is the main difference. I'm actually going to elaborate that perhaps a little bit more later on today. McCluen then, his schick basically is to recognise that media is a technology and to say, as a technology it's an environment, so that's really where we finally get to new media and today. And McCluen acknowledges Mumford, I'm not sure if he acknowledges Geddes but he certainly acknowledges the influence of Mumford and also people like Siegfried Gideon who was also working very closely in the same terrain. I added in at the end Venturi because Venturi's innovation, I think, in the understanding of cities is absolutely to reject the city understood as a kind of sequence or series of figural spaces, spaces known primarily as shapes, in other words as

containers, which as containers may have certain character to them, certain qualities. He completely and utterly rejects that, rather you might say the sort of conventional cannon honour of an ism [?] which really goes right back to the Renaissance artists who are shaping urban space through the study of one point perspective representational technology and proposes instead that the city is effectively an information field. In Learning From Las Vegas he produces this series of graphic and other studies of the city where he just very carefully looks at all the different forms of information and he's primarily thinking about highway signs and whatnot, and billboards and the marques of the gambling casinos in Las Vegas, but actually it's a way of thinking about the city that has really nothing to do with Las Vegas and he also brings it to bear on places like Times Square, and what's important about it, and he makes this quite clear, he's not so much interested in the message behind the billboard, the advert for Colgate toothpaste or whatever, but rather the kind of form that this stuff comes in, the way it's dispersed as a field, and that's spot on what Marshall McCluen is talking about, who as you know says the medium is the message and not the content, and by that he means the important thing at least with respect to the shaping of social relations is not any particular message but rather the form it comes in, whether it's coming as an oral message, a written message or a digital message. So I think there is this quite incredible environmental theme that takes us right from Geddes right to I hope today. I'd like actually to read something and the only reason why I'm going to read it is because I don't think I can hold it in my head as well as I'd like to, in fact I probably won't read it either, but I'll begin. I want to put public space somehow, perhaps it's all clear to you why we might have a seminar series that includes something on new media and something on policing, but maybe it just isn't clear to me and I need to write more about it, and I'd like to have another 15 minutes if nobody is too bored, and then I think we'll go downstairs and then we'll have lunch. [muffled from here] I guess a word about myself, I come to a conference as a generalist, I set out from Lacan's space, not me at all, Lacan, as someone who is interested in space and all of it's testers [?] I'm interested in the machine that construct it [muffle ends]. I'm concerned about the relation of public space and public speech, freedom of space and freedom of speech. And it occurs to me, and this is not something I've really cooked up but perhaps in the second session with Andres Guadamuz, this lawyer chap, perhaps this will be cooked up but it seems to me that public space is a legal entity, as indeed is freedom of speech, they're regulated by statute and common law and they're different kinds of public spaces, depending on the laws that have enacted them. And it occurs to me also that the way public space is being increasingly policed is going part and parcel with the policing of freedom of speech. I'm referring to the, recently the government, the recent anti-terrorism bill, which is this incredible hotchpotch, it's basically made it against the law to protest within a kilometre of Westminster, unfortunately I don't have it in my notes but there is currently a case in the courts where someone has challenged that by precisely demonstrating within that space and it occurs to me that as soon as you have a law like that that disallows the expression of public politics in a space, you've basically taken it out of circulation as public space. It's very hard for me to understand even if, say, Trafalgar Square or Parliament Square, I should say, is quite a large space that can hold lots of people, it's

very difficult for me to understand how that's public space anymore, civic space, if we can't actually use it as civic space. Also, I think we speak of the public domain, it's a word that's used a lot and I don't, although I think it's sometimes used as a metaphor, I don't think it's a metaphor at all, I think it's domain means quite literally space, I think public domain is quite literally the space that public speech occurs in. Speech utters in the bedroom is either amatory or familial. Speech uttered at the dinner table is either familial or collegiate, and it's only public when it's uttered in or could be uttered in public space, and without the provision the public domain, the most important instance of which is pubic urban space, it's difficult to understand what we might mean by public speech, freedom of speech. So, to my mind this workshop is predicated on the ineluctably spatial aspect of media and information. Media and information are spatial not only because of images and images may be images of space, or images may be arranged in space, and certainly not because digital information constitutes a virtual reality; in fact I don't think there is anything virtual about being yoked to your screen, and that's actually something I'd just like to hammer on the head, my opinion about this. I'm not sure that a workshop on urbanism has anything to do with the virtual, I think the term virtual space is a deeply conservative one because it implies that one would carve out a separate spatiality for the digital when the intention of this workshop is precisely not to carve out a separate space for the digital but to look at how the digital exists in space and begins to give it new textures and new shape. To carve…

MAN: Can we take a break there, we need to change the reel, change the tape.

LORENS: Okay.

END OF RECORDING